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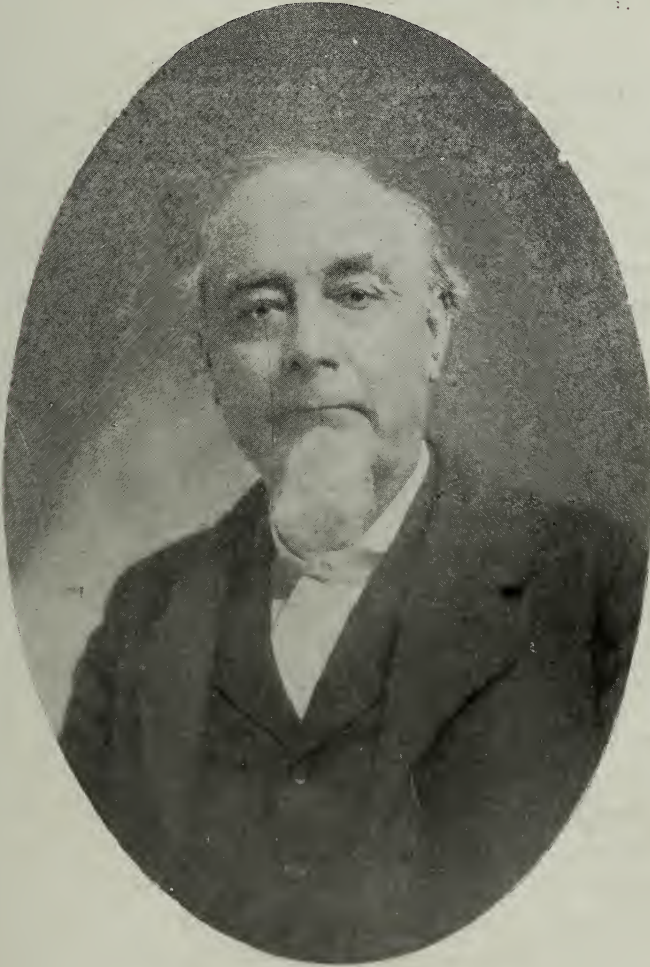
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ARKANSAS' GREATEST PHILANTHROPIST



CAPTAIN W. W. MARTIN

By

Ex-Governor George W. Donaghey

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Arkansas' Greatest Philanthropist and Private Citizen

In the midst of a blinding snow storm with uncovered head, before a large audience on a cold November day in 1912, at Canton, Ohio, W. W. Martin, a captain in the Confederate Army, acting as the official spokesman of a large delegation of progressive citizens of Arkansas traveling through the northern states to advertise its resources, gently placed flowers on the grave of Ex-President McKinley, a major in the Federal Army. This beautiful act of a brave leader of the "Lost Cause" in paying a tribute of respect to an honored soldier and officer of the opposing army, may have been in part responsible for the death of Arkansas' greatest philanthropist, for upon his return home it was found that Captain Martin had taken a severe cold on the trip, which later developed into pneumonia from which he died.

Captain Martin up to the present is easily Arkansas' greatest philanthropist. Through his social reforms and through the institution, Hendrix College, founded by him, he projected his life further into the future and perhaps will type the civilization of his adopted state longer and more completely than any other of her citizens. A well endowed college has proven to be the most permanent as it is the most productive institution of man. The colleges and universities founded during the Middle Ages and early modern times still stand, made immortal by their endowments. Resting on their ancient foundations they have survived revolutions, wars, and dynasties. These ancient seats of learning are today, as they have been through the ages, a most powerful force for civilization and human progress, developing as they have, the greatest scientists, philosophers and constructive leaders of mankind.

In the light of these facts the act of Captain Martin in establishing Hendrix College on what will probably prove to be a permanent foundation in the heart of an undeveloped but grow-

ing commonwealth, makes him both a philanthropist and a man of rare vision. Yes, his work, immortal as it is, mocks the transitory pleasures and ambitions of life, on which most of us spend our time and means. Like Mary of old he chose the better part.

AS A COMMUNITY BUILDER.

"I want you to take the overseership of that Pickles Gap Road. Your salary shall be the same as mine."

In this manner and with a flash of humor playing all over his face Captain Martin addressed me on one occasion when he was serving without pay as Road Commissioner of Faulkner County, having refused compensation in order that all available funds might be spent on the roads. I instantly accepted the challenge and soon that road, once the worst, was the best in the county and Captain Martin was a happy man, as he always was when he had rendered some worthy public service. It was the Captain's big-heartedness and his simple, fascinating manner of soliciting my help that prompted me to respond and devote gratuitously much time to superintending the work. This act of serving the public without pay was characteristic of the man. Unselfish devotion to the public welfare was a conspicuous element in his character. Indeed the Captain was great as a community builder.

Soon after the war he entered the mercantile business on a small scale at Springfield, Arkansas, a little town with three or four "groceries" (saloons) and one dry goods store. The whiskey interest controlled everything. Roads, churches and schools were poor. When he moved his business to Conway in 1883 he left Springfield free from saloons, with good roads, schools and churches, and to Captain Martin was this transformation due. The cause of temperance and righteousness needed a leader, and the young merchant conducted the fight, risking everything in the struggle. Neither did his move to Conway bring him rest; for soon after he was well settled in business he opened war on the six saloons of the town and after a hard fight closed them. The people made their leader mayor and as such he was a terror to the bootleggers, blind tigers and evil-doers. Under him prohibition was real, not nominal.

To the streets and sidewalks he gave much time. For the most part the streets were ungraded, boards served as sidewalks

and the drainage was poor. Public funds for improvements were indeed meager. The Captain's enemies had insisted that driving saloons out would bankrupt the city and would bar all progress. He faced the issue squarely. It was a contest between brain and matter. Daily he walked the streets and supervised the improvements in his quiet way and without the exhibition of authority. Notwithstanding the Captain gave his services to the town free of charge the progress was slow. Politicians tried to poison the minds of the people by pointing out that some streets were worked while others had to wait. But slowly the streets were graded and drained, bridges supported by stone piers were built and flag stones took the place of board walks. The churches and schools received no less of his time and thought. Good buildings for the churches and the public schools were erected under his inspiration and leadership. To all such enterprises he was a liberal giver, always heading the list though there were other citizens with larger means than he.

AS THE FOUNDER OF HENDRIX COLLEGE.

But Hendrix College is Captain Martin's chief monument, though the cultured, progressive town of Conway is also a memorial to him. It was in his relation to Hendrix College that Captain Martin showed himself a man of large vision and a real benefactor. Reared in obscurity in a community atmosphere tending to narrowness and without the advantage of higher education, he won the proud place of being Arkansas' greatest philanthropist and private citizen.

MARTIN WINS LOCATION OF HENDRIX FOR CONWAY.—When the re-location of Hendrix College was thrown open to competitive bids, Captain Martin, though never a man of large means, at once offered to donate \$10,000 to secure the college. This act was electrical in its effect; it raised the ideals of the people and inspired them to join in the movement. But the obstacles were real, the people were poor, property values were low, and real estate scarcely had a stable value.

Conway, a town of about 1,000 people, was temporary in construction and the country was comparatively undeveloped. But it was a situation like this that brought to light the great qualities of Captain Martin. Under his leadership subscriptions

were secured payable in five annual installments. When the subscriptions were all in the total was not considered enough. To a group of citizens assembled to consider the matter he proposed that all present increase their subscriptions by ten per cent. All agreed and the sum totaled \$72,000. Business men estimated the subscriptions as worth \$55,000. At this stage Captain Martin's practical mind and ability as a leader showed themselves in a high degree. He called for volunteers to join him in making bankable paper for \$55,000. Sixteen of the most substantial citizens responded and signed the paper with him. This done Captain Martin with his Gideon-like band appeared before the Board of Trustees of Hendrix College at Little Rock, March 4, 1890. When the bids were opened it was found that none had equipped themselves in such a business-like manner as had the delegation from Conway, and therefore that town was selected as the location of the College.

MARTIN'S FAITH AS HE PASSED THROUGH THE SHADOWS.-- But the people had scarcely settled down to normal conditions after their rejoicing when such hard times set in as try men's souls. Overflows in the spring, drouths in the summer, and low price of cotton brought a gloom which thickened with the passing of months. The price of cotton fell so low that even under favorable crop conditions it would not pay for the cost of production. The financial depression in the early nineties extended throughout the United States and over several years. Many subscribers to the bonus found themselves unable to pay. Failures and death impaired the security of the guaranty fund of \$55,000. Pessimism settled like a pall over the people. Many thought that the buildings could not be erected and that the town might lose the college. In the face of these conditions all turned to one man—the man who had lead them in the darkest hour of their fight against the saloon and who had guided the movement to secure the college. They did not have to wait long for the decisive word. The order was to proceed with the buildings. His instructions were followed with deeds. Often he was on the ground, inspiring the workmen with his calm manner, low voice, and kind words. But what was more significant to the laborers was that every Saturday night their checks were cashed at Captain Martin's office. Throughout this trying period he was al-

ways the same calm, serene, dignified, masterful man. Whatever struggle may have taken place within, his soul was never conquered. His confidence and deeds born of a large faith and far-seeing vision saved the day.

MARTIN A HERO IN ADVERSITY.—But after the buildings were erected and paid for the College saw many dark days. The income was not sufficient to take care of the expenses, notwithstanding the affairs of the College were conducted with rigid economy. Rather than let the standards of the institution be lowered, Captain Martin without a murmur executed his own notes for the annual deficits for running expenses. Much of this he later gave outright to the College. During this period it became known in financial circles that he was overloaded with debts and at one time his credit was called in question. This situation he met in his characteristically frank manner. His creditors sent agents to see him about his obligations. To one and all he made a full and honest statement of his liabilities and assets. He concealed nothing. He plainly told all creditors that all of his property stood for all of his debts and that he was ready to deliver it to his creditors at any time that they might require it. Such frankness and honesty disarmed suspicion and sent the creditors away with perfect confidence in the Captain. No one forced collection. Under this heavy load he buckled on, as it were, a new armor and addressed himself to the task of extricating himself from the situation. He was often seen at his office in the late hours of the night turning the leaves of his ledgers, and then upon closing them before retiring for the night, he would stand for a time by his desk with his left elbow on its top, his hand gently smoothing downward the beard on his chin, while with the fingers of his right hand he would drum on the backs of the ledger. Success crowned his efforts. He paid off all his obligations. Indeed he soon found himself able to lead in founding another bank.

MARTIN THE LARGEST CONTRIBUTOR TO THE \$300,000 ENDOWMENT MOVEMENT.—The last great effort of Captain Martin for Hendrix College was to secure \$300,000 endowment for it. To make permanent this, the supreme interest of his life, was his chief ambition. This crowning effort of his eventful career also

met with success. During the campaign he turned over to the College, as a part of its endowment, all his stock in the Bank of Conway, Faulkner County Bank, and the State National Bank, representing as it did the cream of the savings of a lifetime. This raised his total gifts to the College to over \$75,000.

MARTIN'S IDEALISM.—The career of Captain Martin raises the question whether a life devoted to public service and philanthropy is the best type of life. Are our songs of praise and public honors on behalf of such benefactors hypocritical or do they reflect our deliberate judgments? Are our monuments to their memory expressive of our deeper sentiments or are they affectations? When the great majority of mankind live the selfish or self-centered life, can we say that a man like Captain Martin is successful or practical? Which are we to accept as wisdom, the selfish practice of the world or the work of the notable exception, such as Captain Martin? Are our deeds or our professions right?

Captain Martin was right. He chose the better part. He was successful. He lived a great life. He was successful because he accomplished most of the tasks that he set before himself. Did he enjoy life? Yes, for he was happiest when he saw the object of his philanthropy or public service prosper. But might he not have spent all of his means to gratify himself? Being a man of simple habits he had all of the material comforts and conveniences that he wanted. He was an extremely modest man. Was he ambitious to win fame? He has probably made for himself a greater place in history than any man in the political or military history of the state. If he was ambitious to serve the public, he will live for ages to come in the town of Conway, made by his efforts one of the most attractive places to live in the South. If he desired to impress himself upon the future, through Hendrix College he will be a factor in the education of the choice men of Arkansas for all time to come.

MARTIN'S INVESTMENT BOTH PERMANENT AND PRODUCTIVE. ---Dividends will be declared on his investment in Hendrix for countless ages to come in the form of highly trained Christian leaders, lawyers, doctors, educators, ministers and statesmen. He was therefore wise in selecting the church college in which



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to invest his money. The plans and enterprises of most of us die with us or soon thereafter, but Hendrix College, the chief enterprise in which Captain Martin invested, will grow with time, receiving every year larger and larger gifts. In the years to come it will probably receive individual gifts much larger than the total of Captain Martin's benefactions, thus making securer and more productive his investment in the College. Indeed all subsequent benefactions will mutually strengthen each other. Amherst, Dartmouth, and Princeton receive annually many thousands in gifts. The law "To him that hath shall be given" applies. So anxious are people to be connected with permanent institutions that old, well-established colleges are compelled to make regulations governing the receipts of gifts, such as the requirement that the gift of a building must meet rigid conditions as to quality, equipments and must be endowed in a sum sufficient that the expense of maintenance will never fall upon the college treasury. In an undeveloped state like Arkansas one of the reasons for the small gifts to the colleges is the feeling of uncertainty regarding their future. When permanency is assured benefactors become more generous and the development of the college is more rapid. Hendrix has entered this stage and her development will probably be rapid for the next decade.

GREAT PHILANTHROPIST AND THE SMALL COLLEGE.

That the action of Captain Martin in selecting the small college, which in this country is the church college, as a field of investment and of public service, is in line with a noticeable tendency among some of our great philanthropists, is seen in the fact that D. K. Pearsons of Chicago gave away all of his princely fortune to the small college. The following letter of Andrew Carnegie to Dr. Pearsons is expressive of this drift of thought among big philanthropists:

"My Dear Colleague and Elder Brother:

"The highest worship of God is service to man. I adopt that. I am following your example in the small college field, thanks to you for having led the way. I agree with you that the small good colleges are most in need. It has become the fashion to give to the principal universities. These do not get too much, but the less known get far too little. With every good wish and much gratitude for the example you set me,

"Your humble disciple,

"ANDREW CARNEGIE."

Another noteworthy fact is that the General Education Board of New York City, composed of great business men and educators, selected the small church college as the institution on which they should bestow the largest part of the millions at their disposal in order to make it count most for human progress. These facts give added significance to Captain Martin's selection of the church college as his field of investment.